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NEW YORK, June 17, 1905.

To the Editor of THE COLLECTOR AND ART CRITIC:

Your suggestion, in the June number, that John La Farge should be commissioned to paint a large lunette for the Central Court of the Metropolitan Museum is an excellent one. John La Farge is the dean of our mural decorators, as well as the first one who gave an impetus to this form of American art. His last work for the new capitol at St. Paul, Minn., shows that in no sense has he lost any of his wonderful inventive genius—age rests lightly upon him. This canvas, "The Relation of the Individual to the State," typified by a group showing Socrates and his friends discussing The Republic, is in the artist's grand-est style.

Some scheme should be devised by public or private subscription or official appointment to have Mr. La Farge execute this lasting memorial to himself in our Metropolitan Museum.

Respectfully,

W. S. B.

Mr. Louis R. Ehrich, the well known art expert, is spending the summer abroad. Collectors of works of art, who are or will be in Europe at the same time, and who should wish to avail themselves of Mr. Ehrich's expert knowledge when purchasing antique paintings, might communicate with him through Messrs. Brown, Shipley & Co., of London.

THE TARIFF ON ART.

An ally has entered the lists in the fight for the abolition of the duty on art in the new "Academy Notes," the organ of the Albright Gallery of Buffalo. Director Kurtz devotes a leading article to this subject, in which he enunciates many of the arguments which have been put forward in this magazine during the past season.

The Copley Society of Boston is also entering the field of agitation, and shortly a meeting will be held in Washington, D. C., where steps will be taken to further the project. Senator Lodge and Congressman McCall are in sympathy with the movement and have expressed it as their opinion that the time is ripe for determined action.

A report has come from London that Americans were among the principal buyers at the recent important art sales in London, but that their purchases will not be imported here, but stored away until the barrier, which excludes the masterpieces of art by a prohibitive duty, has been removed. What object can be gained, what poor artist can be protected, by the exclusion of the Raeburns, Reynolds's, Morlands, Hoppners and Hogarths?

It has been said that the American public at large does not appreciate art, and that thousands of poor artists are starving. Let us be logical. There will never be a home market for American paintings until we have a people who understand art and love it. But how can we ever have such a people when we keep out of the country the master works of the greatest painters which, being seen, will be appreciated and generate a love for art in those who are now indifferent? When this love for art once enters the masses the reflex result will be the buying of American paintings, which also will have increased in artistic merit by the study of these same imported masterpieces on the part of the native painter.

And again I say: *The duty on art must be abolished!*

Some five years ago when certain bequests were made in Cleveland for the establishment of an art gallery in that city, I took occasion to warn against the purchase of fake old masters, and I stated that an attempt would be made by certain persons with a Cleveland pull to unload "flaunting frauds in gaudy frames." Now these bequests have been paid and preparations are at last made to build this museum, we hear at once of these attempts. The first in the field is a man from Albany, N. Y., who offers to Mayor Johnson "many old masterpieces which he has gathered, many of great historical value." There is a man in New York who has long been waiting to place his "gems from the gutter" in the Cleveland institution, and there is a man in Cleveland town who has a collection of fine Barbizon and modern Dutch pictures—alas, descending from the notorious erstwhile Reynolds' place of New York—which can be had for a song, mayhap, some as a gift if the rest are bought. [*Verb. Sap.*]

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Some of the Paris art critics have made the discovery this spring that story-telling pictures are interesting, and they call for more of them. Arsene Alexandre, of the *Figaro*, devotes considerable space to demonstrating that an artist who has something to say is more of an artist than one who hasn't anything to say!

This is putting the matter in a false light. There is room for discrimination. A composition with figures which depicts an incident, pure and simple, without appealing to the mind, is the story-telling picture that cannot be considered great art, no matter how excellent its mechanical execution. The other story-telling picture that grasps the heart, calls forth thought, oftentimes teaches a truth, must be regarded, as the ideal performance—the greatest paintings in the world are such compositions, which are still *per se* story-telling pictures.

There is a painting in the Metropolitan Museum which, despite its glaring faults, always attracts me for that reason. It is the well-known life-size figure of Napoleon—so impressive because it suggests the man of destiny, past the zenith of his power. Many a poor piece of painting has been redeemed by the nobility of the thought expressed.

* * *

A few subscribers were disappointed in not being able to secure the copy of *Oriental Ceramic Art*, which was noticed in the last number. But the first applicant, who wrote the same day this magazine reached him, had it, and since only one copy could be supplied the others had to be denied. On future occasions I would counsel quick action.

* * *

In a poem by Rev. Dr. Franklin, of London, read at the first dinner of the Royal Academy, the poetaster alluded to the manufacture of bogus old masters; one verse was as follows:

"For this purpose some shrewd picture-merchants, they say,
Keep many a good Raphael and Rubens in pay;
And half the Poussins and Correggios you meet
Were daubed in a garret in Aldersgate street."

* * *

A special feature of the coming monthly numbers of this magazine will be the treatment of some specific topic in each number. The October number, for instance, will have a thorough discussion of "Oriental Rugs," the November number of "Stained Glass," the December of "Interior Decoration and Furniture." Other monthly issues will be partly devoted to Enamels, to Metalwork, to Lacquers and Fans, to Coins and Postage Stamps, and so on. Collecting in its broadest sense will furnish the topics.